

EPA Region III

Office of Public Affairs

EARLY BIRD HEADLINES

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*** MORNING HOT LIST ***

First 11 Dimock homes sampled by EPA show no health concerns

SCRANTON TIMES-TRIBUNE The first 11 Dimock Township water supplies tested by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency did not reveal levels of contamination that could present a health concern, but the samples indicated the presence of arsenic and other compounds that will require further tests at some homes, the agency said Thursday. Agency officials hand delivered test results to residents whose wells were sampled during the week of Jan. 23 and will meet again with the families individually to review the results and answer questions. The first test results reported Thursday represent about a sixth of the data collected by the EPA over weeks of sampling in a nine-square-mile area of Dimock where the agency is investigating the potential impact of nearby natural gas drilling on water supplies. In a statement Thursday, the EPA said samples from six of the 11 homes showed concentrations of sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria, but all were within the safe range for drinking water. The sampling results also identified arsenic in two homes' water supplies, both of which are being sampled again by the agency. "Although the (arsenic) levels meet drinking water standards, we will resample to better characterize the water quality of these wells," EPA spokesman Roy Seneca said in the statement. Three of the 11 homes tested during the first week of sampling are receiving replacement water deliveries from the EPA. Those deliveries will continue "while we perform additional sampling to ensure that the drinking water quality at these homes remains consistent and acceptable for use over time," Seneca said. The agency began testing about 60 water wells in January after the EPA's review of past tests by the state and other groups raised concerns about contamination from Marcellus Shale drilling.

EPA Clears Water in Pennsylvania Fracking Town After Complaints

BLOOMBERG NEWS SERVICE The water in 11 wells near Dimock, Pennsylvania, is safe, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said, disappointing residents and health groups who say the federal government should intervene in a dispute with Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. (COG). In a statement released late yesterday, the EPA said its tests begun early this year found sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria, but at levels "within the safe range." Two wells were found to have elevated levels of arsenic, and the agency will do a second round of tests of those homes. "If they say it's safe to drink, I want to see them come drink the water from my well," Craig Sautner, a local resident who is part of a lawsuit against Cabot, said in an interview. Sautner said his water is cloudy, and when he draws from his well he can hear gas gurgling in. Residents in Dimock complained that hydraulic fracturing operations, or fracking, by Cabot near their homes had put methane in their water and endangered their health. Fracking is a process that injects water, sand and chemicals into deep shale formations to free trapped natural gas. The residents' plight gained wider attention late last year after Cabot cut off water deliveries and activists such as the actor Mark Ruffalo traveled to the town to make their own deliveries. Cabot said its tests of the water in the area last year turned up no signs of contaminants beyond legal limits. "We are

pleased that data released by EPA today on sampling of water in Dimock confirmed earlier findings that Dimock drinking water meets all regulatory standards," the company said in an e-mail yesterday. A boom in gas production using hydraulic fracturing helped increase gas supplies, cutting prices 32 percent last year while raising environmental concerns about tainted drinking water. The EPA is studying the effects of fracking on water and weighing a series of nationwide regulations.

EPA: Water quality OK in Pa. gas drilling town

ASSOCIATED PRESS Federal environmental regulators said Thursday that well water testing at 11 homes in a northeastern Pennsylvania village where a gas driller was accused of polluting the aquifer failed to show elevated levels of contamination. The Environmental Protection Agency, which is sampling well water at dozens of homes in Dimock, Susquehanna County, said initial test results "did not show levels of contamination that could present a health concern." Dimock has been at the center of a fierce debate over the environmental and public health impacts of Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale drilling industry. State environmental regulators had previously determined that Houston-based Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. contaminated the aquifer underneath homes along Carter Road in Dimock with explosive levels of methane gas. Residents who are suing Cabot assert their water is also polluted with drilling chemicals. Many other residents of Dimock say that the water is clean and that the plaintiffs are exaggerating problems with their wells to help their lawsuit. The federal environmental agency began testing the water in January, more than a month after the state Department of Environmental Protection allowed Cabot to stop delivering replacement water to about a dozen families. The EPA said water samples from six of the 11 homes for which it received initial test results showed sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria, but at levels that did not exceed primary or secondary drinking water standards. Arsenic was found in the well water of two homes, but at levels that did not present a health hazard, regulators said. Of the 11 homes, EPA has been delivering fresh water to three homes where it said prior test results had showed alarming levels of contamination. EPA said it will continue supplying water to the homes "while we perform additional sampling to ensure that the drinking water quality at these homes remains consistent and acceptable for use over time." Dimock resident Scott Ely, who is among the plaintiffs suing Cabot, disputed the EPA interpretation of his test results. He said the results showed a range of contaminants at unsafe levels, including sodium and arsenic. "We've had hundreds of tests done out here, and we've had so many different scientists say you have bad water here, there's not a doubt about it. And yet when the state and feds test our water, they say we can drink it," said Ely, who plans to meet with the EPA to review the test results. "Absolutely not."

Obama: Drilling alone not enough

BALTIMORE SUN President Barack Obama told a crowd at Prince George's Community College Thursday that U.S. oil production has reached an eight-year high — but drilling alone won't meet the nation's energy needs. LARGO — — With rising oil prices creating a drag on the economy and his re-election effort, President Barack Obama mocked Republican critics of his alternative-energy policy Thursday, comparing them to the "cynics and naysayers" who didn't believe the Earth was round or that television would take off. Obama used a campaign-style appearance at Prince George's Community College to launch a new, more aggressive line of attack against the GOP presidential contenders who have blamed him for rising prices at the pump. He defended what he called his "all-of-the-above" strategy on energy, telling the boisterous crowd of students and supporters who packed Novak Field House that U.S. oil production has reached an eight-year high during his administration. But he said oil alone won't meet the nation's energy needs. "Lately, we've heard a lot of professional politicians, a lot of the folks who are running for a certain office — who shall go unnamed — they've been talking down new sources of energy," Obama said. "They dismiss wind power. They dismiss solar power. They make jokes about biofuels." Obama compared his critics to 19th-century President Rutherford B. Hayes, who he said dismissed the telephone: "It's a great invention, but who would ever want to use one?" "That's why he's not on Mount Rushmore," Obama said, in one of several lines that drew roars. The president has focused in recent weeks on energy as he tries to get out in front of his Republican rivals on a possible area of vulnerability come November.

Feds outline federal aid for reducing water pollution

EASTON STAR DEMOCRAT PHILADELPHIA As local governments grapple with staggering cost estimates for pollution reduction strategies, federal officials Tuesday announced financial help. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, through the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund, is calling for proposals for \$4 million in water pollution reduction grants for local governments. Talbot County officials already are working on an application, said Sandy Coyman, county planner. The largest cost here is for urban stormwater strategies, although Coyman didn't have final numbers. Septic upgrades, however, could cost at least \$40 million. "Septics are relatively small compared with urban stormwater," Coyman said. "We're really hopeful that first scenario with huge costs, we'll be able to find alternative ways." One such alternative could come in the form of a grant from the funds announced Tuesday. "Now more than ever, the Chesapeake Bay needs the creativity, innovation and ingenuity of local governments," said EPA Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin. "This new EPA funding will enable local governments to implement the best solutions to on-the-ground challenges they face in helping to restore the Bay, and share those approaches with other towns throughout the entire watershed."

Shell to build billion-dollar petrochemical 'cracker' in Pa

PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE Shell Oil Co. announced it will build a massive petrochemical "cracker" plant in Potter, Beaver County, making Pennsylvania the winner in a tri-state competition for the billion-dollar industrial operation. The decision caps a months-long courting by state and national officials for the plant, which promises thousands of jobs and is expected to bring billions of dollars in investment to the region. The cracker plant will break down gas compounds extracted from the Marcellus Shale into other elements. The facilities can cover hundreds of acres. Shell has signed an agreement with the Horsehead Corporation, whose operation is located 28 miles north of Pittsburgh and once operated as a zinc smelter. Construction on the plant could be about two years away due to permit procedures and Shell's desire to expand rail access to the site, U.S. Rep. Mark Critz, D-Johnstown, said. The state's bundling of tax incentives -- including the expansion of the Keystone Opportunity Zone program to include projects worth more than \$1 billion -- adds up to "in the neighborhood of tens in millions of dollars" in breaks for Shell, Mr. Critz said. Similar ethane plants have created more than 10,000 permanent jobs elsewhere. The location will be Shell's fifth cracker plant. The firm owns four plants at two locations in Texas and Louisiana. "We are very pleased to have signed this site option agreement," Dan Carlson, Shell Chemical's general manager for new business development, said in a written statement. "This is an important step for the project, and we look forward to working with the communities in Pennsylvania, and gas producers across Appalachia, as we continue our efforts to develop a petrochemical complex." Pennsylvania's new regulatory and impact fee law on shale drilling earmarks \$20 million over the next three years to encourage oil and gas refinery projects. Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa., wrote a letter in January to Shell officials urging the company to consider Pennsylvania.

Study says Curtis Bay, Brooklyn among MD's most polluted areas

BALTIMORE SUN Group urges more air quality monitoring, limits on truck exhaust. The Curtis Bay and Brooklyn neighborhoods in industrialized South Baltimore are among the most polluted in Maryland and even the nation, says a Washington-based environmental group, which is calling for tighter scrutiny of air quality there and curbs on diesel truck emissions. Drawing on federal data, the Environmental Integrity Project says the Curtis Bay zip code has the highest toxic air pollution from businesses and factories in the state, accounting for more than a third of all such emissions in the state and nearly 90 percent of of Baltimore city's total. The neighborhood's emissions also rank 74th highest among all 8,948 zip codes nationwide, according to the group's report. Residents of the neighborhoods, which are sometimes called the Baybrook area, are among the most likely in Maryland to develop respiratory problems from the toxic air pollution in their community, according to the group's report. One census tract is also among the top 10 percent for cancer risk from air emissions. Leah Kelly, a lawyer with the environmental group, says pollution is coming from diesel trucks streaming through the neighborhoods to reach factories and businesses in the

area, from port facilities and from traffic using the harbor tunnel nearby.

EPA's Test Results Show Safe Drinking Water in Dimock

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA The Environmental Protection Agency says the drinking water test results of 11 homes in Dimock, Pa. did not show contamination high enough to pose a health threat. Two of the homes tested did show arsenic, but the EPA says the arsenic levels are within safe drinking water standards. They plan to retest the water from those households. The water supplies of six of 11 homes did show sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria. Again, the EPA says the concentrations were within the safe range for drinking water. The EPA says it will continue to provide water to three homes while doing additional sampling. The agency says it will re-evaluate sending water to those households after conducting its second round of testing. In the meantime, the EPA says they will meet with residents to discuss their health-related concerns. The EPA stepped in to Dimock's water controversy after state regulators said Cabot Oil and Gas could halt free water deliveries to residents. The head of Pennsylvania's DEP, Michael Krancer, criticized the federal action. In a statement issued by the EPA on Thursday, the agency says it continues to base its decisions on science.

Senate supports boosting commuter subsidy

WASHINGTON POST The maximum tax-free subsidy that employers, including the federal government, can pay for their workers to use public transit in their commuting would nearly double to \$240 a month under a provision in the transportation bill the Senate passed Wednesday. The maximum had been \$230 a month in 2009-2011 under a series of temporary laws, but when a further extension was not passed by the end of last year, the amount reverted to its previous level of \$125 a month. Meanwhile, a subsidy for parking at commuter lots to take public transportation rose from \$230 to \$240 a month because of an inflation adjustment. The Senate language, which moves to the House, would set the maximum transit subsidy at \$240 a month for calendar year 2012, retroactive to the start of the year. "Improving transit benefits will prove incredibly important to all working people that use or would like to use public transportation and are seeking critical relief for commuting costs," Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, said in a statement.

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

EPA finds no 'health concern' in Dimock well water The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday said that well-water tests of 11 homes in Dimock, Pa., near Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling "did not show levels of contamination that could present a health concern." The samples included three of four households that are receiving drinking water deliveries from the federal government. EPA said it will reevaluate the need to provide water after an additional round of testing. "We are pleased that data released by EPA today on sampling of water in Dimock confirmed earlier findings that Dimock drinking water meets all regulatory standards," said George Stark, spokesman for Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., whose drilling activity has been blamed for well-water contamination.

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Shell to build billion-dollar petrochemical 'cracker' in Pa Shell Oil Co. announced it will build a massive petrochemical "cracker" plant in Potter, Beaver County, making Pennsylvania the winner in a tri-state competition for the billion-dollar industrial operation. The decision caps a months-long courting by state and national officials for the plant, which promises thousands of jobs and is expected to bring billions of dollars in investment to the region. The cracker plant will break down gas compounds extracted from the Marcellus Shale into other elements. The facilities can cover hundreds of acres. Shell has signed an agreement with the Horsehead Corporation, whose operation is located 28 miles north of Pittsburgh and once operated as a zinc smelter. Construction on the plant

could be about two years away due to permit procedures and Shell's desire to expand rail access to the site, U.S. Rep. Mark Critz, D-Johnstown, said. The state's bundling of tax incentives -- including the expansion of the Keystone Opportunity Zone program to include projects worth more than \$1 billion -- adds up to "in the neighborhood of tens in millions of dollars" in breaks for Shell, Mr. Critz said. Similar ethane plants have created more than 10,000 permanent jobs elsewhere. The location will be Shell's fifth cracker plant. The firm owns four plants at two locations in Texas and Louisiana. "We are very pleased to have signed this site option agreement," Dan Carlson, Shell Chemical's general manager for new business development, said in a written statement. "This is an important step for the project, and we look forward to working with the communities in Pennsylvania, and gas producers across Appalachia, as we continue our efforts to develop a petrochemical complex." Pennsylvania's new regulatory and impact fee law on shale drilling earmarks \$20 million over the next three years to encourage oil and gas refinery projects. Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa., wrote a letter in January to Shell officials urging the company to consider Pennsylvania.

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

County could collect about \$5.6 million from drilling fee KITTANNING -- If officials approve a fee allowed by a new state law, Armstrong County would collect about \$5.6 million and keep more than \$3 million for the county and its municipalities this year from the Marcellus shale gas well drilling industry. The commissioners Thursday discussed the state's recently enacted Marcellus legislation that gives counties the option of imposing an impact fee on each deep-shale horizontal gas well. The commissioners had planned to approve the fee Thursday. An ordinance was to be approved at the public meeting but commissioners opted to re-advertise it for voting the next time they meet at 1:30 p.m. on April 5. They have until April 16 to approve it. "This was a busy meeting and the issue needed more attention," said Commissioner Chairman Dave Battaglia of postponing the vote. "It's an important decision. There may be questions on how it works." Battaglia said the board supports the fee ordinance and will likely adopt it. Many of the state's counties are expected to do the same. "When you look at that amount of money, it's hard to walk away from it," he said. "We're not in a position to turn down revenue." The amount of the fee, which varies year to year, is determined by the previous year's average price of natural gas. Based on 2011 prices, the fee per well is \$50,000. The fee drops \$10,000 in the second year and by \$5,000 more in the third year. According to data from Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and industry estimates, there are 112 Marcellus drilling sites in Armstrong County. At \$50,000 a well, the fee would generate about \$5.6 million. Based on that amount and using the established breakdown, the state keeps about 40 percent (about \$2.2 million); the county, 20 percent (\$1.1 million) and 40 percent (\$2.2 million) would be dispersed to the county's 45 municipalities. "We're going to have to adopt it," said Commissioner Rich Fink. "I have not received one negative (comment) to not take it."

Analysts: Economic benefits of petrochemical plant could be huge If Shell Oil Co. builds a multibillion-dollar petrochemical plant in Beaver County, the Pittsburgh region could be to the natural gas industry what Houston and Dallas are to America's oil industry, an economist said on Thursday. The economic benefits to Western Pennsylvania would go far beyond a single ethane "cracker" plant, potentially creating a boom in new manufacturing employment here, said Kurt Rankin, an economist with PNC Financial Services Group Inc. "You could potentially see plastics manufacturing get a boost, but you need to outfit that plant and outfit the (natural gas) rigs and be able to supply what those operations need in order to remain in operation," Rankin said. The region's manufacturing employment in general would "get a boost from natural gas in the coming decade," Rankin said. Shell stressed that no decision to build the plant has been made. While it's been estimated that the plant, which would break down components of natural gas into the building blocks for plastics, could cost between \$1 billion and \$4 billion to build, the company has not said what it might spend. Shell Oil is the U.S. subsidiary of Netherlands-based Royal Dutch Shell plc. Royal Dutch Shell CEO Peter Voser told an energy industry conference in Houston this month that it could be years before the company green-lights the plant. "There are many hurdles to clear before we can even take an investment decision to build the proposed petrochemical complex," Dan Carlson, general manager of new business development for Shell Chemicals, said yesterday. "We need to confirm the suitability of the site, secure ethane feedstock supply, complete the engineering and design work, confirm the support of customers for our products, receive all the necessary permits and confirm that the project is economically robust and competitive." Despite those hedges, some local officials said just having the Pittsburgh region picked

for the Shell plant is a major accomplishment.

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA

EPA's Test Results Show Safe Drinking Water in Dimock The Environmental Protection Agency says the drinking water test results of 11 homes in Dimock, Pa. did not show contamination high enough to pose a health threat. Two of the homes tested did show arsenic, but the EPA says the arsenic levels are within safe drinking water standards. They plan to retest the water from those households. The water supplies of six of 11 homes did show sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria. Again, the EPA says the concentrations were within the safe range for drinking water. The EPA says it will continue to provide water to three homes while doing additional sampling. The agency says it will re-evaluate sending water to those households after conducting its second round of testing. In the meantime, the EPA says they will meet with residents to discuss their health-related concerns. The EPA stepped in to Dimock's water controversy after state regulators said Cabot Oil and Gas could halt free water deliveries to residents. The head of Pennsylvania's DEP, Michael Krancer, criticized the federal action. In a statement issued by the EPA on Thursday, the agency says it continues to base its decisions on science.

BEAVER COUNTY TIMES

Shell names Horsehead property as possible cracker plant site Shell Oil Co. has chosen a property in Beaver County to possibly locate a multi-billion dollar ethane cracker plant, and it's not the site most thought it would be. There's also a long road ahead before anything will be built, officials cautioned Thursday. Even though all the talk coming into Thursday's announcement was that the former J&L steel mill property in Aliquippa was the most likely location in western Pennsylvania, Shell instead signed a land option agreement on the soon-to-be closed 300-acre Horsehead Corp. property in Potter and Center townships. Houston-based Shell has been looking at sites in western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio and northern Virginia for several months for a \$2.5 billion petrochemical plant where ethane could be converted into chemicals that can be used in everything from tires to diapers.

DELAWARE COUNTY DAILY TIMES

County council exploring potential for Sunoco site MARCUS HOOK — Delaware County Council is commissioning an evaluation of the Sunoco Inc. site here to determine what the best use for the refinery would be in light of the fact that the company has said no bids were placed for the facility. "Today, we stand here to look ahead at a new era for this site," council Chairman Thomas J. McGarrigle said Thursday. "Today, we are taking a proactive step forward. In order to do that, we need to assess the potential uses for this valuable riverfront property." Council commissioned the county's Industrial Development Authority to conduct a \$100,000 "Economic Opportunities" study to look at the best possible uses for the site, including potential links to the Marcellus Shale. In December, Sunoco idled the Marcus Hook refinery, citing severe revenue margin decreases and the majority of the work force was laid off last month. "I think we need to be realistic about the fact that there is a tremendous new energy source right here in Pennsylvania," U.S. Rep. Patrick Meehan, R-7, of Upper Darby, said, adding that the Marcellus Shale energy capacity may rival that of Saudi Arabia

HARRISBURGH PATRIOT NEWS

SRBC approves water withdrawals for Marcellus drilling over chants from protesters A snowy-haired rabbi, the son of holocaust survivors, said Thursday that members of the Susquehanna River Basin Commission were being "good Germans" when they approved water withdrawals for fracking operations over the chanted objections of 20 protesters. "I am not comparing this to the Holocaust, certainly not," said Rabbi Mordechai Liebling, of Philadelphia, "but the principle is the same." He said, "I learned at a very young age that it is important to stand up for what you believe in and not allow bureaucrats to make decisions that imperil people's lives." The protesters chanted "I pledge to protect the Susquehanna!" as the SRBC voted to approve 46 water withdrawals, 40 of which were for natural gas drilling operations. Capitol Police lined the walls of the meeting room, but no one was arrested. The process of extracting natural gas from the Marcellus Shale involves a process called fracking in which millions of gallons of water are mixed with sand and chemicals and pumped at high pressure into the ground, cracking the rock and releasing the gas.

SCRANTON TIMES-TRIBUNE

First 11 Dimock homes sampled by EPA show no health concerns The first 11 Dimock Township water supplies tested by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency did not reveal levels of contamination that could present a health concern, but the samples indicated the presence of arsenic and other compounds that will require further tests at some homes, the agency said Thursday. Agency officials hand delivered test results to residents whose wells were sampled during the week of Jan. 23 and will meet again with the families individually to review the results and answer questions. The first test results reported Thursday represent about a sixth of the data collected by the EPA over weeks of sampling in a nine-square-mile area of Dimock where the agency is investigating the potential impact of nearby natural gas drilling on water supplies. In a statement Thursday, the EPA said samples from six of the 11 homes showed concentrations of sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria, but all were within the safe range for drinking water. The sampling results also identified arsenic in two homes' water supplies, both of which are being sampled again by the agency. "Although the (arsenic) levels meet drinking water standards, we will resample to better characterize the water quality of these wells," EPA spokesman Roy Seneca said in the statement. Three of the 11 homes tested during the first week of sampling are receiving replacement water deliveries from the EPA. Those deliveries will continue "while we perform additional sampling to ensure that the drinking water quality at these homes remains consistent and acceptable for use over time," Seneca said. The agency began testing about 60 water wells in January after the EPA's review of past tests by the state and other groups raised concerns about contamination from Marcellus Shale drilling.

STATE COLLEGE CENTRE DAILY TIMES

School districts cope with gas boom UNIVERSITY PARK — Rapid, large-scale development of the Marcellus Shale is having an impact on many Pennsylvania school districts, education experts said at a conference Thursday intended to offer information on coping with the gas boom. Thursday's conference, "Understanding and Preparing for Marcellus Shale Impacts in Your School District," attracted superintendents, school board members and education officials from across the commonwealth, as well as Ohio and New York. Experts from Penn State warned

districts to expect more traffic, worse roads and little new funding, but also more job opportunities for graduates. "There's a firestorm coming their way, and anything they can do to prepare for it is important," said Barry Scheetz, a professor of civil engineering at Penn State who has studied the impact the gas industry has had on Pennsylvania's roads. "If they can learn from here what to expect, they're going to be far, far better off." David Davare, research director at the Pennsylvania School Boards Association, said school districts will want to add more job training programs to give students a better chance at the jobs being created by the industry, but they shouldn't expect a sizable increase in their revenues to pay for such programs. The state's recently passed drilling impact fee does not allocate funds to schools, and property and earned income taxes, which make up the bulk of local education funding, are predicted to rise by a maximum of 4 percent in the most heavily drilled districts, he said. "School districts will see limited additional revenues, as gas reserves, royalties and lease payments are tax exempt and out-of-state residents moving into the districts are not paying state taxes," Davare said. The one-day conference was jointly organized by the Center on Rural Education and Communities, the Pennsylvania School Study Council, the Penn State Marcellus Center for Outreach and Research and the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools.

TOWANDA DAILY REVIEW

Local resident alarmed about increased export of liquefied natural gas TOWANDA - A Sayre resident is urging the Bradford County commissioners to pass a resolution opposing plans to ramp up the export of liquefied natural gas from the United States because he says it will raise domestic natural gas and electricity prices and cause a "mad rush" to drill more in the United States. "I think we should be preserving our county and not have a wild frenzy of drilling" in Bradford County, Walton Brennan of Sayre said at the Bradford County commissioners' meeting on Thursday, where he urged the commissioners to pass the resolution and to send a letter to the Obama administration expressing opposition to the increased export of liquefied natural gas. "The Sierra Club is against it (increasing the export of liquefied natural gas) and I think rightfully so, because it's going to lead to higher prices for electricity and natural gas for people living in this country," he said. By ramping up the export of liquefied natural gas, "there is going to be a mad rush to do more drilling and more fracking," which will cause more pollution locally, he said. Brennan said a lot of new facilities for the export of liquefied natural gas could be constructed in the near future. "The United States Department of Energy is giving serious consideration to approving many new facilities to export natural gas in the form of liquefied natural gas," Brennan wrote in an email to the commissioners on Wednesday. "These facilities could be up and running by the year 2015 and will export natural gas to Europe and Asia."

EASTON EXPRESS TIMES (LEHIG VALLEY LIVE)

Marcellus shale drilling concerns the subject of two-day program at Northampton County Community College Last year, local Marcellus shale drilling opponents held a program to educate the public. This year, the Lehigh Valley's anti-drilling organizations want to mobilize the public. The two-day program, Marcellus Shale Exposed: A Symposium for Truth and Action is slated for Friday and Saturday at Northampton Community College in Bethlehem Township, Pa. The free public event sponsored by the Lehigh Valley Sierra Club and Berks Gas Truth, will include the screening of the award-winning documentary "Gasland" and talks by a range of speakers on the topic, including Cornell University engineering professor Anthony Ingraffea. At a springtime program last year, Lehigh Valley Sierra Club committee chairwoman Sheila Gallagher, of Forks Township, said organizers were pleasantly surprised by the turnout, but directions on citizen activism weren't clearly laid out.

YORK DAILY RECORD

Pa. river commission OKs more drilling water use HARRISBURG, Pa.—Demonstrators on Thursday disrupted another meeting of the Susquehanna River Basin Commission to protest the approval of more water use by Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling companies. The five Susquehanna River Basin Commission members approved 48 applications over the demonstrators' chants of "We pledge to protect the Susquehanna." The commission, which regulates the water quantity—but not quality—in a region that supplies water for 6 million people, including Baltimore, has representatives from the federal government, Pennsylvania, Maryland and New York. Panel officials defended the approvals, saying natural gas drilling is not a threat to water quantity in the river basin, while

a spokesman for an industry group, the Marcellus Shale Coalition, said "responsible natural gas development and the environment can, do and must co-exist." Typically, several million gallons of water are needed to hydraulically fracture a well. In Pennsylvania, about 5,000 Marcellus Shale wells have been drilled since the beginning of 2005, according to the state Department of Environmental Protection, in an arc stretching from southwestern Pennsylvania north and east through large stretches of state-owned forests to its agricultural northern tier. Commission executive director Paul Swartz said the agency is being careful about the timing and location of the water withdrawals to protect smaller waterways from going dry or getting too low. He said it encourages the withdrawals from larger bodies of water.

YORK DISPATCH

Column: Beast of Bay to go on Endangered Species List The odds are good you have never hooked into an Atlantic sturgeon. But thanks to a recent move that stirred plenty of controversy, you may someday get the chance. For many of us, when we hear of the Endangered Species Act, we immediately think of the bald eagle. Thanks to the provisions in the law, America's mascot went from nearly extinct a generation ago to a relatively healthy and thriving population today. That's what biologists and regulators have in mind for one of the world's oldest fish. Starting April 6, the mighty Atlantic sturgeon will officially become an endangered species. This marks a sad chapter in the history of the Chesapeake Bay's largest native fish. When Captain John Smith first explored the bay some 400 years ago, he commented that the oysters "lay thick as stones" and there were more sturgeon "than could be devoured by dog and man." Times have changed. As recently as 1890, biologists believe there were as many as 180,000 female sturgeon spawning in the fresh water of the Delaware River each year. Today, that figure is said to be less than 300. What happened? Sadly, it's the usual tale. Sturgeon survived whatever it was that killed the dinosaurs. But they may not survive the many threats created by man. Sturgeon were overfished. Their environment was abused. And lumbering cargo ships forced us to dredge some of the species' top breeding grounds. One of the main reasons sturgeon populations have plunged while fish such as the bay's prized striped bass have rebounded without the drastic measures of the Endangered Species Act is solely the fault of the beastly bottom feeder. They grow too slow. Female sturgeon often don't reach sexual maturity until they are at least 15 years old. That's a long time to avoid a hook, stay out of polluted waters or dodge a cargo ship's massive propeller. If they can beat the odds, though, a sturgeon can grow to lengths of more than 14 feet and live to be a century old. The fish's lengthened lifecycle is the reason biologists believe the stringent protections provided by the Endangered Species Act is the best way to keep sturgeon from going extinct.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Pa.)

EPA: Water quality OK in Pa. gas drilling town Federal environmental regulators said Thursday that well water testing at 11 homes in a northeastern Pennsylvania village where a gas driller was accused of polluting the aquifer failed to show elevated levels of contamination. The Environmental Protection Agency, which is sampling well water at dozens of homes in Dimock, Susquehanna County, said initial test results "did not show levels of contamination that could present a health concern." Dimock has been at the center of a fierce debate over the environmental and public health impacts of Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale drilling industry. State environmental regulators had previously determined that Houston-based Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. contaminated the aquifer underneath homes along Carter Road in Dimock with explosive levels of methane gas. Residents who are suing Cabot assert their water is also polluted with drilling chemicals. Many other residents of Dimock say that the water is clean and that the plaintiffs are exaggerating problems with their wells to help their lawsuit. The federal environmental agency began testing the water in January, more than a month after the state Department of Environmental Protection allowed Cabot to stop delivering replacement water to about a dozen families. The EPA said water samples from six of the 11 homes for which it received initial test results showed sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria, but at levels that did not exceed primary or secondary drinking water standards. Arsenic was found in the well water of two homes, but at levels that did not present a health hazard, regulators said. Of the 11 homes, EPA has been delivering fresh water to three homes where it said prior test results had showed alarming levels of contamination. EPA said it will continue supplying water to the homes "while we perform additional sampling to ensure that the drinking water quality at these homes remains consistent and acceptable for use over

time." Dimock resident Scott Ely, who is among the plaintiffs suing Cabot, disputed the EPA interpretation of his test results. He said the results showed a range of contaminants at unsafe levels, including sodium and arsenic. "We've had hundreds of tests done out here, and we've had so many different scientists say you have bad water here, there's not a doubt about it. And yet when the state and feds test our water, they say we can drink it," said Ely, who plans to meet with the EPA to review the test results. "Absolutely not."

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

Senate supports boosting commuter subsidy The maximum tax-free subsidy that employers, including the federal government, can pay for their workers to use public transit in their commuting would nearly double to \$240 a month under a provision in the transportation bill the Senate passed Wednesday. The maximum had been \$230 a month in 2009-2011 under a series of temporary laws, but when a further extension was not passed by the end of last year, the amount reverted to its previous level of \$125 a month. Meanwhile, a subsidy for parking at commuter lots to take public transportation rose from \$230 to \$240 a month because of an inflation adjustment. The Senate language, which moves to the House, would set the maximum transit subsidy at \$240 a month for calendar year 2012, retroactive to the start of the year. "Improving transit benefits will prove incredibly important to all working people that use or would like to use public transportation and are seeking critical relief for commuting costs," Colleen M. Kelley, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, said in a statement.

Blog : What will kill us in 2050? Pollution. Air pollution tends to get wildly underrated as a public health concern. Everyone knows malaria is deadly. Or that access to clean water is a problem. And yet, in the next few decades, air pollution will kill far more people than both of those things combined, according to a new report. On Wednesday, the OECD released its "Environmental Outlook to 2050," which contained a few spots of cheery news. Humanity is making steady progress against malaria. Worldwide, the number of deaths from the disease are expected to fall by half by 2050. And fewer people will die from unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation in the future. But the number of deaths caused by air pollution — which includes ground-level ozone, particulate matter, and "indoor pollution" — are expected to skyrocket, killing more than 6 million people per year by mid-century. Here's the chart

WTOP RADIO

Online viewing of osprey nest in Va. debuts WILLIAMSBURG, Va. - If eagle and penguin cams weren't enough -- how about an osprey cam? The Virginia Institute of Marine Science has set up a camera so that the public can view a nesting osprey family online. The real-time video feed comes from a nest atop a 65-foot water tower on the VIMS campus in Gloucester Point. The nest site has been occupied every breeding season for several decades. That season usually runs from March through July. Researchers are interested in ospreys because they live almost exclusively by eating live fish, such as croaker, menhaden and white perch. That helps researchers understand the health of the ecosystem. The nesting site the camera is set up on gives ospreys easy access to nearby fishing grounds on the York River, a major tributary of Chesapeake Bay. The osprey nest can be viewed at www.vims.edu/osprey .

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL

Rescue of sea turtle eggs endangers area nonprofit It started out as one of Delaware's most endearing environmental success stories of late 2011 -- the hatching and release of eight baby green sea turtles.

Above-normal temps likely through June, experts say

DELAWARE CAPE GAZETTE

Delaware cancer rates decline The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services recently announced progress in both the incidence and mortality rates for all site cancers in Delaware. The data contained in the Cancer Incidence and Mortality in Delaware, 2003-2007 report pointed to declines in both incidence and mortality across the state. The report also highlighted important improvements in mortality rates for African-American men and a reduction in disparities in colorectal cancer screening among Caucasians and African-Americans. In Delaware from 1993-97 to 2003-07, the cancer death rate decreased 18 percent. The rate outpaced the U.S. rate, which dropped 12.1 percent during the same 10-year period.

Construction moves forward on Thompson Island A new boardwalk and observation deck are going up at Thompson Island Nature Preserve. The Delaware State Parks property's three-quarter-mile-trail will be widened and improved, and a 130-foot-long boardwalk will be built. At the end of the trail, an observation deck with railing will feature an additional access area 6 feet over the marsh so people in wheelchairs can enjoy the view. The preserve has been owned by Delaware State Parks since 2002 and is used by local hikers. It lies between Rehoboth Beach and Dewey Beach, but the preserve is a tough spot to access because parking is scarce off Bay Road. The project will cost an estimated \$300,000, with the money coming from the Federal Recreational Trails program.

Milton engineer pushes new water tower Milton — Residents say Milton is moving too quickly with a referendum to borrow money for a water system upgrade because the town still doesn't know where more than a third of it's water is going. Resident Allison Howes said she would like accurate water usage statistics before casting a vote. "Why are we having a referendum when we are missing 44 million gallons of water [annually]?" she said. "How are we going to vote when we have figures like this? If we had the correct figures then we could vote responsibly." Milton Town Engineer Scott Hoffman says a new water-storage system south of the Broadkill River would give the town a redundant system that will improve reliability and water pressure. An elevated storage tank is the town's best option to solve a water shortage problem, he said. Hoffman, an engineer with Cabe Associates, explained the pros and cons of various water storage methods at public meetings Feb. 28 and March 1 at the Milton library.

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE

Shell to build ethane cracker plant in Pa., not W. Va. CHARLESTON, W. Va. -- West Virginia officials today were trying to make the best of an announcement that Shell chemical had picked a site in Pennsylvania for construction of a multi-billion-dollar natural gas "cracker" plant. Shell said it had signed a land option agreement to evaluate a site near Monaca, Pa., about 20 miles northeast of Weirton, for the project. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin and other state officials have been pitching West Virginia to Shell, lobbying the company and passing a \$300 million tax break, hoping to lure the facility to one of several sites in the state's Northern Panhandle. Ohio and Pennsylvania have also been trying to land the project, which would take advantage of the boom in natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale, and turn drilling byproducts into valuable chemicals, creating potentially thousands of jobs. "Naturally, we are disappointed by this decision," Tomblin said after Shell's announcement. "We worked extremely hard to develop a competitive proposal. Ultimately, the decision was related to site-specific factors beyond our control." During a press conference, Tomblin said that Shell's decision came down to West Virginia being unable to provide a site that met its needs for 500 acres of vacant flat land. Shell's preferred West Virginia site, believed to be in the Northern Panhandle, featured 250 acres of flat land, but the adjacent acreage needed to expand to 500 acres is, according to Commerce Secretary Keith Burdette, "very much occupied." Citing two unnamed sources with direct knowledge of the negotiations with Shell, The Associated Press reported that the company chose Pennsylvania because its preferred West Virginia location encroached on Mountaineer Casino, Racetrack and Resort south of Chester.

Kanawha officials pin hopes on second cracker CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- The Kanawha Valley was never on Shell Oil Co.'s short list of potential sites for a multibillion-dollar ethane cracking facility, area economic development leaders said Thursday. So Shell's announcement that the company plans to build a massive petrochemical plant in southwestern Pennsylvania didn't come as a surprise to local officials, who continue to court other companies interested in building a "cracker" in Kanawha County. Shell wanted to build its plant closer to drilling operations near the northern Panhandle and southwestern Pennsylvania, Kanawha business and political leaders said. "I'm not surprised at all by Shell's announcement," said Matt Ballard, president of the Charleston Area Alliance economic development group. "[Thursday's] announcement doesn't change anything. We're still in the game." Ballard said "global companies" with an interest in building a cracker continue to conduct "due diligence on sites in the area." Ballard and other economic development officials have declined to name the companies, but the Gazette has previously reported that Brazil-based Braskem is one of them. South Charleston-based Aither Chemicals also is looking at sites, and plans to build a smaller-scale cracking facility. Kanawha economic development leaders have been shopping the Bayer CropScience Industrial Park in Institute as a site for a cracker. Ballard said he expects additional companies to build cracker plants that will process gas from the Marcellus and Utica shale formations.

W.Va. tries to put good face on loss of Shell cracker CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- West Virginia government officials and business boosters tried Thursday to put a good face on Shell Chemical's announcement that it had chosen a site in Pennsylvania as the potential location for a new natural gas "cracker" plant that could be one of the biggest regional economic development projects in years. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, administration leaders and others pointed to similar proposals under consideration by other companies and argued economic benefits from the Shell facility would easily spill over the border, providing significant jobs for West Virginians. "I'm disappointed, but I'm not suicidal," said Commerce Secretary Keith Burdette. In the much-anticipated announcement, Shell said Thursday it had signed a land option agreement "to evaluate" a site in Monaca, Pa., about 20 miles northeast of Weirton, for the multibillion-dollar project. Shell said it would assess the commercial feasibility of the facility, perform environmental studies on the Pennsylvania site, put together engineering designs, and refine its data on the local supply of natural gas byproducts needed to supply a cracker. Political and business leaders in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio have been trying to land the cracker, which would take advantage of the boom in natural gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale, and turn drilling byproducts into valuable chemicals, potentially creating thousands of jobs. Government officials and economic planners in the Kanawha and Ohio valleys are continuing discussions with possible developers of at least three other cracker projects, and said they remain optimistic about those efforts. "If people try to make it about 'just one thing,' they're simply not informed," said Charleston Area Alliance President Matt Ballard, who is trying to lure a cracker to the Kanawha Valley, perhaps to vacant property at the Bayer CropScience facility in Institute. In the chase for the Shell cracker, Pennsylvania approved legislation that would give the project a 15-year tax abatement, while Ohio reportedly offered Shell incentives totaling \$1.43 billion. Earlier this year, West Virginia lawmakers rushed approval of a 25-year property tax break -- worth an estimated \$300 million -- so that Tomblin could tout the legislation during a visit to Houston to lobby the company. After studying those proposals, the West Virginia Center for Budget Policy said in a new analysis Thursday that if tax breaks were a major factor, Shell would have chosen an Ohio site. "West Virginia offered an almost tax-free climate to Shell, but the state fell short," said Ted Boettner, the center's executive director. "This tells us that the state's business tax climate had very little to do with Shell's decision to locate in Pennsylvania.

Blog: Alpha listed among 'most controversial' mining firms An interesting news release from earlier this week happened to cross my desk this morning. It's from an outfit called RepRisk, which describes itself as "a leading provider of dynamic data on environmental and social risks for an unlimited universe of companies and projects." Here's the announcement:

Blog: Why did Shell pick Pa. for its cracker plant? Today's announcement by Shell Chemical that it has picked a site in western Pennsylvania for further "evaluation" for its proposed natural gas "cracker" plant is already drawing criticism for West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin. Recall that Gov. Tomblin had made luring this facility to West Virginia a top priority in his State of the State address earlier this year:

WHEELING INTELLIGENCER

Shell Chooses 'Cracker' Site in Pennsylvania WHEELING - From blaming a proposal to raise taxes on natural gas drillers to criticizing labor unions and chiding a casino for not wanting to relocate, officials spread plenty of blame Thursday for Royal Dutch Shell taking its ethane cracker to Pennsylvania. "I am extremely upset about this. Over the past two years, I have spent a lot of time on this," said Corky DeMarco, executive director of the West Virginia Oil and Natural Gas Association, in reaction to Shell's Thursday announcement that the company has an option agreement with Horsehead Corp. to build the multibillion-dollar facility near Monaca, Pa., along the Ohio River northwest of Pittsburgh. Although the Monaca cracker is far from a done deal, Shell has agreed to conduct "further engineering design studies, assessment of the local ethane supply, and continued evaluation of the economic viability of the project."

Region Still Could Benefit WHEELING - Royal Dutch Shell's planned Pennsylvania ethane cracker could still help West Virginia and Ohio generate new jobs and development, according to public officials and industry leaders. "While located in Pennsylvania, the supply chain and potential economic impact of this project will span the multi-state region, while serving as an anchor in the resurgence of the domestic manufacturing sector," Kathryn Klaber, president of the Canonsburg, Pa.-based Marcellus Shale Coalition, said Thursday. "This is certainly an exciting day for the natural gas industry, this region and the nation." Ohio Gov. John Kasich said he hopes Shell follows through with the Pennsylvania building plans because the Buckeye State should be able to gain additional downstream development from it. "A lot of those plants will make plastics, and our 100-year leadership in plastics will give Ohio an enormous edge in competing for those facilities and jobs," he said. "What is happening in Ohio right now - not in two years - are major investments that will build out our oil and gas industry," Kasich added, referencing the plans by Chesapeake Energy to construct a \$900 million processing complex in Columbiana and Harrison counties, as well as those of MarkWest Energy to build \$500 million worth of processing infrastructure in Harrison and Monroe counties.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE JOURNAL

WV policy questioned in wake of cracker announcement West Virginia seemingly gave all it had to attract a world-class ethane cracking facility within its borders, but the state took a big morale hit Thursday afternoon when Shell Chemicals said it was looking to Pennsylvania instead. The very first bill of the West Virginia legislative session was a tax incentive worth an estimated \$300 million in property taxes. Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin touted the economic benefit and importance of an ethane cracker since he has been in office. "Today we are sending a message that West Virginia wants to be a partner with potential investors and bring jobs to West Virginia," Tomblin said in news release celebrating signing of the tax incentive. "I believe this legislation, coupled with the historic Horizontal Well Act relating to Marcellus shale development, speaks clearly to our state's intent and commitment to rebuilding our manufacturing base, right here." Of course, the release from Shell is not a promise it would build the facility — just an indication of where they may build one.

PARKERSBURG NEWS AND SENTINEL

Gas industry official touts drilling benefits PARKERSBURG - A local representative of the oil and natural gas industry told more than a dozen community members and Parkersburg City Council Tuesday about how advancements in the industry could benefit the region.

McKinley seeks answers on cracker plant decision PARKERSBURG - A U.S. congressman wants to find out the reasons why West Virginia was not chosen for the site of an ethane cracker plant so the state can be better prepared to pursue another such facility. U.S. Rep. David McKinley, R-W.Va., was in Parkersburg Thursday talking to a group of local businessmen and private citizens at the Parkersburg City Building and then talked to the Editorial Board at The Parkersburg News and Sentinel. The announcement Thursday that West Virginia lost out on a multibillion-dollar chemical plant from Shell was one of the topics the congressman talked about. Shell announced it was planning to build the plant in Monaca, Pa., close to the West Virginia border. From the preliminary information McKinley has gotten, Shell chose the Pennsylvania site because of access to transportation.

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE SUN

Study says Curtis Bay, Brooklyn among MD's most polluted areas Group urges more air quality monitoring, limits on truck exhaust. The Curtis Bay and Brooklyn neighborhoods in industrialized South Baltimore are among the most polluted in Maryland and even the nation, says a Washington-based environmental group, which is calling for tighter scrutiny of air quality there and curbs on diesel truck emissions. Drawing on federal data, the Environmental Integrity Project says the Curtis Bay zip code has the highest toxic air pollution from businesses and factories in the state, accounting for more than a third of all such emissions in the state and nearly 90 percent of of Baltimore city's total. The neighborhood's emissions also rank 74th highest among all 8,948 zip codes nationwide, according to the group's report. Residents of the neighborhoods, which are sometimes called the Baybrook area, are among the most likely in Maryland to develop respiratory problems from the toxic air pollution in their community, according to the group's report. One census tract is also among the top 10 percent for cancer risk from air emissions. Leah Kelly, a lawyer with the environmental group, says pollution is coming from diesel trucks streaming through the neighborhoods to reach factories and businesses in the area, from port facilities and from traffic using the harbor tunnel nearby.

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Obama: Drilling alone not enough President Barack Obama told a crowd at Prince George's Community College Thursday that U.S. oil production has reached an eight-year high — but drilling alone won't meet the nation's energy needs. LARGO — — With rising oil prices creating a drag on the economy and his re-election effort, President Barack Obama mocked Republican critics of his alternative-energy policy Thursday, comparing them to the "cynics and naysayers" who didn't believe the Earth was round or that television would take off.

Obama used a campaign-style appearance at Prince George's Community College to launch a new, more aggressive line of attack against the GOP presidential contenders who have blamed him for rising prices at the pump. He defended what he called his "all-of-the-above" strategy on energy, telling the boisterous crowd of students and supporters who packed Novak Field House that U.S. oil production has reached an eight-year high during his administration. But he said oil alone won't meet the nation's energy needs. "Lately, we've heard a lot of professional politicians, a lot of the folks who are running for a certain office — who shall go unnamed — they've been talking down new sources of energy," Obama said. "They dismiss wind power. They dismiss solar power. They make jokes about biofuels." Obama compared his critics to 19th-century President Rutherford B. Hayes, who he said dismissed the telephone: "It's a great invention, but who would ever want to use one?" "That's why he's not on Mount Rushmore," Obama said, in one of several lines that drew roars. The president has focused in recent weeks on energy as he tries to get out in front of his Republican rivals on a possible area of vulnerability come November.

Studies find warming doubles MD coastal flooding risks Up to 40,000 homes at risk from sea-level rise, storm surge. New research indicates that rising sea level from climate change will roughly double the risks of storm-related flooding in coastal communities in Maryland and nationwide.

Nauseating smell prompts calls to Howard health department Pungent fertilizer smell wafting through Clarksville. Something smells funny in Clarksville. A few residents have complained of a nauseating, pungent odor from the area of Maryland 108 and Sheppard Lane to Howard County's health department, said spokeswoman Lisa DeHernandez. She said the department's community hygiene program conducted a search of the area Wednesday and found the source to be coming from fertilizer on a large farm. They received the same calls last year, she said. They expect rain to reduce the stench. In the meantime, DeHernandez said, the farmer will be asked to wet the perimeter areas of the property to help reduce the odor but, because agricultural properties are mostly exempt from nuisance codes, there's no requirement or enforcement measures that the department can take.

Maryland ranks third on list of "Top Tornado States" Maryland may not have as large a number of tornadoes as states in Tornado Alley, but it still ranks No. 3 on a new list of the top tornado states.

O'Malley seeks bigger 'flush fee' hike Proposes straight increase from \$30 to \$75 a year. Hoping to overcome lawmakers' qualms, the O'Malley administration has revamped its proposal to increase the Bay Restoration Fund, seeking a straight increase in the "flush fee" paid by all households from \$30 to \$75 annually

ANNAPOLIS CAPITAL

Our Bay: Where have all the waterfowl gone? (March 10) The question arises everywhere I go in this area: Where are all the waterfowl? Until recently, every morning this winter as I awoke and looked out on Oyster Creek, I would loudly complain to my wife, "Where are all the ducks?" Folks who focus on the natural world are clamoring for answers to what happened to the ducks and geese around Anne Arundel County and elsewhere in bay country. The answer is good news for the critters but bad news for the critter watchers: The annual waterfowl surveys flown by U.S. and Canadian wildlife agencies in the Prairie Potholes of the upper Midwest and southern Canada last spring document an increase in overall waterfowl numbers. However, because of the very mild winter, many of the waterfowl remained north and either stayed in Maryland farther north, concentrated on the Eastern Shore, or arrived late into our area. Each year during the first week of January, pilots and biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources conduct aerial surveys and count ducks, geese and swans along Maryland's Chesapeake Bay shoreline and Atlantic coast. This year the survey teams counted 633,700 waterfowl, which despite the unusually mild weather, is only slightly lower than the number of waterfowl observed during that time last year, 651,800. However, this year's survey was down nearly 25 percent from 2009. The canvasback totals were 14,300 compared with 46,100 last year and were the second lowest ever recorded. Survey teams counted slightly fewer Canada geese (342,600) along bay shoreline habitats compared to last year (397,700). Mild temperatures, an abundance of open water and a lack of snow in the northern portion of the Atlantic flyway caused delays in migration south.

SALISBURY DAILY TIMES

Our View: Assateague's economic value documented While Lower Shore residents may have long suspected Assateague Island National Seashore was a valuable treasure, that fact has now been documented in an analysis conducted by a Michigan State University professor and included in a report issued recently by the National Park Service.

WJZ TV BALTIMORE

EPA To Grant Federal Money To Clean Up Toxic Dundalk Dump DUNDALK, Md. (WJZ)— It's toxic enough to be declared the newest super fund site by the federal government. **Alex DeMetrick** reports, after decades of waiting, a small dump near Dundalk is finally slated for clean-up. There are warning signs and fencing to keep people out of what was once the Sauer dump near Dundalk. It hasn't been used in decades, but long time neighbors remember when it was operating. "Well, you know it was legal then, what the hell. They dumped anything and everything," Joe Duschl, who lives in the neighborhood, said. "Well it was legal, but it should never have been done," Horacio Tablada of the Maryland Department of Environment said. Because Maryland's Department of Environment has found PCBs at the site. Plastic covers some of the ground where electric transformers were once dumped, and the toxic chemical leaked out. "So there's some in the ground water, which is very shallow, and some in the sediment and it gets into the water," Tablada said. The water: The back river. For years, the state has been warning people not to eat bottom-feeding fish caught here because they store up PCBs. And for years, it has been trying to figure out how to clean it up. The answer now comes from the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which has declared the abandoned dump a super fund site, meaning federal money. "The expense is related to the PCB removal," Tablada said. "It takes a lot of money to do that." While the EPA has declared the Dundalk dump a super fund site, it hasn't set a date for clean-up to begin. "We're glad to see it's going to happen, you know," Duschl said. "The government just takes a long time to do anything, you know." At a site that's been contaminated a long time. The EPA has yet to estimate the cost for the clean up.

EASTON STAR DEMOCRAT

Counties receive ag cost-share grants ANNAPOLIS Gov. Martin O'Malley announced March 7 the Board of Public Works approved \$188,388 in agricultural cost-share grants in 10 counties for 22 projects that will prevent soil erosion, manage nutrients and safeguard water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Together, these projects will prevent some 2,015 pounds of nitrogen, 450 pounds of phosphorus, and 588 tons of soil from entering the Bay and its tributaries. Queen Anne's County was awarded \$36,029 for four projects, including a grade stabilization structure, grassed waterway and lined waterway. Kent County received \$2,003 for a grassed waterway project. These projects are funded by state general obligation bonds and are not part of MDA's general fund budget allocation. The board is made up of O'Malley, Treasurer Nancy K. Kopp, and Comptroller Peter Franchot.

Feds outline federal aid for reducing water pollution PHILADELPHIA As local governments grapple with staggering cost estimates for pollution reduction strategies, federal officials Tuesday announced financial help. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, through the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund, is calling for proposals for \$4 million in water pollution reduction grants for local governments. Talbot County officials already are working on an application, said Sandy Coyman, county planner. The largest cost here is for urban stormwater strategies, although Coyman didn't have final numbers. Septic upgrades, however, could cost at least \$40 million. "Septics are relatively small compared with urban stormwater," Coyman said. "We're really hopeful that first scenario with huge costs, we'll be able to find alternative ways." One such alternative could come in the form of a grant from the funds announced Tuesday. "Now more than ever, the Chesapeake Bay needs the creativity, innovation and ingenuity of local governments," said EPA Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin. "This new EPA funding will enable local governments to implement the best solutions to on-the-ground challenges they face in helping to restore the Bay, and share those approaches with other towns throughout the entire watershed."

WOODBRIIDGE PATCH

Stormwater Management Fees Could Be Raised Additional funds needed to comply with Chesapeake Bay mandates and additional needs. Stormwater management fees in Prince William County could be going up. But, the good thing is, a fee raise would put the county closer to being in line with pollution-reducing Chesapeake Bay mandates. A Public Works department presentation to the Board of County Supervisors on Tuesday highlighted the need for a stormwater fee increase, which included needing new staffing, new drainage systems, watershed studies, stream assessments and restorations, dam safety, a floodplain program and Capital Improvement Project funding. Additional funding is also needed to keep the county in line with goals for the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load requirements set by the Environmental Protection Agency. The Chesapeake Bay TMDL aims to put the area on a "pollution diet" by reducing 185.9 million pounds of nitrogen, 12.5 million pounds of phosphorus and 6.45 billion pounds of sediment per year across several states. Prince William County has to comply with the TMDL requirements over a 15-year period. According to county documents, the current stormwater management fee for Prince William County is \$26.36 for a single family home, \$17.78 for multi-family unit or townhouse and \$12.80 per 1,000-square-feet for non-residential units. If the board approves a fee increase, it will add roughly \$10 to the fee in 2013, with a \$1 increase per year over the next four years. The additional fee increase in fiscal year 2014 and beyond is an estimated three percent per year inflation adjustment, according to the county presentation

VIRGINIA

NORFOLK VIRGINIAN-PILOT

OspreyCam gives live view of nest in Gloucester GLOUCESTER POINT The Norfolk Botanical Garden eagles have some online company: A pair of mating ospreys atop a water tower at Gloucester Point.

ROANOKE TIMES

Controlled burns fight fire with fire It takes a lot of preparation and caution to set a forest on fire in a way that will promote its growth and health. On top of Warm Springs Mountain, the conditions are dry, the temperature is 61, the winds are light and the humidity is low. It is a good day to start a forest fire. And that is just what The Nature Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service did Thursday. "This is great," Sam Lindblom, fire manager for the conservancy, said after climbing out of a helicopter from which he had just surveyed a test fire set on nearby Brushy Mountain. "It's doing exactly what we want." Although an environmental group and the public caretaker of national forestland might seem an unlikely duo to be setting the woods on fire, what happened in Bath County on Thursday was actually a controlled burn aimed at improving the health of the forest. By clearing out brush and creating open spots in the forest canopy, a controlled burn can lead to a greater diversity of trees and improved habitat for wildlife. It is, in other words, a case of burning some trees to save the forest. Thursday's blaze, which covered about 1,500 acres, was the first strike in a plan to burn 5,877 acres owned by the Forest Service and The Nature Conservancy — one of the largest controlled burns of a mountainous area east of the Mississippi River.

Roanoke Planning Committee OKs new zoning by river Plans for a 20-acre mixed-use riverfront community moved a step closer to reality Thursday, when the Roanoke Planning Commission voted 6-0 to recommend new zoning for land that had previously housed a scrap yard and flour mill. In all, the commission recommended moving eight properties, four each from light industrial and institutional planned unit development, to downtown district zoning. The proposed rezoning will go to the city council for another public hearing and possible final approval next month. The Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority must also determine that the proposal meets design guidelines in the South Jefferson Redevelopment Plan before the project can move forward. A limited liability company called Roanoke River Associates has proposed plans for the property that include retail, office space, housing, a public riverwalk and a \$2 million renovation of the existing, former stables building into a restaurant.

CHARLOTTESVILLE DAILY PROGRESS

DEQ briefs localities on quality of area streams The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality is moving ahead with an effort to clean up four polluted streams in Albemarle County and Charlottesville. Lodge Creek, Meadow Creek, Moores Creek and Schenks Branch are all considered to be impaired by the DEQ because they are not healthy environments for aquatic life. Fishing and swimming are prohibited. As part of a plan to restore the streams, the DEQ hired the Biological Systems Engineering Department at Virginia Tech to identify pollutants in the watersheds of the four streams. "We think sediment is the major stressor and if we can provide a suitable habitat for [microorganisms], that will allow them to come back," said Gene Yagow, a senior research scientist at Virginia Tech. "We think these changes in sediment will get us there, and we will monitor the aquatic community to see if that happens." Sediment chokes off life by depriving habitats for microorganisms that make up the bottom of the food chain. Yagow and his researchers calculated that over 3,200 tons of sediment enter Moores Creek every year, flowing in from stormwater that falls onto the waterway's 21,860-acre watershed. The study is recommending that steps be taken to reduce that amount by 500 tons a year, or a 15.8 percent reduction.

Editorial: Public has right to know about mining Behind education, transportation, taxation, contraception and the other issues that have consumed this General Assembly, there lurks a policy issue of long-term import: uranium mining. And the question now arises: How much input will Virginians have into decisions made about this controversial proposal. Indeed, how much data will they be allowed even to see? First, some background: Uranium oxide deposits exist near Chatham, and mining those deposits was proposed back in the 1980s. At that time, Virginia wisely established a moratorium to allow the state to study this unprecedented, for Virginia, form of mineral extraction. Due to world events that depressed the nuclear energy industry, prices plunged and interest in the project lapsed. But a recent reversal of fortune has revived that interest.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Va.)

Environmentalists push Dominion for wind power RICHMOND -- Environmentalists are urging Dominion

Virginia Power to speed up development of offshore wind power. The Chesapeake Climate Action Network says environmental leaders delivered a petition containing the signatures of more than 10,000 Virginians to the company's headquarters in Richmond today. The petition supports an aggressive development of offshore wind power. Leaders of the group and the Sierra Club's Virginia chapter say a potential 2,400 megawatts of electricity could be generated by wind turbines in the 112,799 acres off Virginia's coast identified by the federal government for lease sale. Dominion Virginia Power said in February that it's interested in building up to 400 wind turbines in Atlantic waters. But keeping costs down will be the challenge.

MISCELLANEOUS

BNA DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

EPA Withdraws Changes to Pennsylvania Plant Rule PHILADELPHIA—The Environmental Protection Agency is withdrawing proposed changes to a final rule limiting sulfur dioxide emissions from the Portland Generating Station in Northampton County, Pa., according to a notice to be published March 16. When EPA issued the final rule in October, it said emissions from the plant cause four New Jersey counties to be in violation of the one-hour air quality standard for sulfur dioxide. In December, EPA issued a direct final rule removing references to the four counties because it had not specified them in its modeling results and clarifying that Portland Station emissions are causing violations of the one-hour standard in New Jersey generally (246 DEN A-9, 12/22/11). EPA said it was withdrawing the December revisions because of an adverse comment it received from Pennsylvania Environmental Secretary Michael Krancer, who said the revisions stem from “a pattern of ‘rush to judgment’ causing mistakes” in EPA rulemakings. He cited numerous changes to the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule proposed by EPA to remedy mistakes in the final regulation. Krancer's comment is available at <http://op.bna.com/env.nsf/r?Open=smy-8setjl>.

Industry Study Estimates Severe Impacts From Air Rules for Fracking Sites Proposed EPA regulations to control air pollution from oil and gas drilling involving hydraulic fracturing would significantly slow drilling, reduce natural gas production, cut royalties to the federal government and private landowners, and reduce state tax revenues, according to a study released by the American Petroleum Institute. The proposed rules are intended to reduce the escape of volatile organic compounds and especially methane from drilling sites.

11,000 Blighted Sites Identified by EPA for Renewable Energy Potential EPA says it has mapped about 11,000 contaminated land and mining sites that could be suitable for renewable energy projects. The sites include brownfields, superfund sites, abandoned mine land sites, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act corrective action sites, and landfills, according to Lura Matthews, a program analyst for EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response. Matthews tells a webinar sponsored by the National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals that the majority of the sites are suitable for solar projects and a lesser number for wind energy generation.

EPA Faulted Over Three-Year Deferral of Biomass Permitting Requirement The decision by EPA to postpone for three years greenhouse gas permitting for sources that burn biomass “creates a broad and unjustified exemption,” environmental groups say in a court filing. EPA lacks the statutory authority to postpone a Clean Air Act requirement that facilities obtain prevention of significant deterioration and Title V operating permits for their greenhouse gas emissions if they burn biomass, the groups argue in a brief filed in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. The groups want the court to vacate the three-year deferral.

EPA Revokes Certain Test Requirements for High-Production Chemicals EPA revokes all testing requirements for four high production volume (HPV) chemicals and certain testing requirements for another six HPV chemicals because they no longer are made in high volumes, companies already have provided the required data, or the tests

proved unfeasible. The four chemicals for which all requirements are revoked are acetyl chloride; imidodicarbonic diamide; methane, isocyanato; and urea, reaction products with formaldehyde. A direct final rule set for publication today means that as of May 15, manufacturers and importers of those four chemicals will no longer be subject to export notification requirements.

Energy Efficiency, Sustainability Discussed at GLOBE 2012 Conference Investing in energy efficiency can help a company's bottom line and increase employee productivity, speakers at the GLOBE 2012 conference say. Christopher Smith, director of DuPont Sustainable Solutions, says DuPont's efficiency efforts in the past 15 years have resulted in \$6 billion in savings.

BLOOMBERG NEWS SERVICE

EPA Clears Water in Pennsylvania Fracking Town After Complaints The water in 11 wells near Dimock, Pennsylvania, is safe, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said, disappointing residents and health groups who say the federal government should intervene in a dispute with Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. (COG). In a statement released late yesterday, the EPA said its tests begun early this year found sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria, but at levels "within the safe range." Two wells were found to have elevated levels of arsenic, and the agency will do a second round of tests of those homes. "If they say it's safe to drink, I want to see them come drink the water from my well," Craig Sautner, a local resident who is part of a lawsuit against Cabot, said in an interview. Sautner said his water is cloudy, and when he draws from his well he can hear gas gurgling in. Residents in Dimock complained that hydraulic fracturing operations, or fracking, by Cabot near their homes had put methane in their water and endangered their health. Fracking is a process that injects water, sand and chemicals into deep shale formations to free trapped natural gas. The residents' plight gained wider attention late last year after Cabot cut off water deliveries and activists such as the actor Mark Ruffalo traveled to the town to make their own deliveries. Cabot said its tests of the water in the area last year turned up no signs of contaminants beyond legal limits. "We are pleased that data released by EPA today on sampling of water in Dimock confirmed earlier findings that Dimock drinking water meets all regulatory standards," the company said in an e-mail yesterday. A boom in gas production using hydraulic fracturing helped increase gas supplies, cutting prices 32 percent last year while raising environmental concerns about tainted drinking water. The EPA is studying the effects of fracking on water and weighing a series of nationwide regulations.

REUTERS

Fracking did not pollute water near homes: US A first round of tests showed no evidence that water at 11 homes in a small town in Pennsylvania near natural gas drilling operations had been polluted to unhealthy levels, U.S. environmental regulators said on Thursday. The Environmental Protection Agency said in January it would perform tests at about 60 homes in Dimock where residents have complained since 2008 of cloudy, foul-smelling water after Cabot Oil & Gas Corp began hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, for gas nearby. Sampling results from the first round of 11 homes "did not show levels of contamination that could present a health concern," a regional EPA spokesman said in an email. Samples from six of the 11 homes did show concentrations of sodium, methane, chromium or bacteria, but those results were all within safe ranges, the spokesman said. Arsenic was found in the water at two of the 11 homes, but the agency determined those levels were also safe. The agency will retest the water at those two homes. The EPA has been delivering fresh water to several homes in Dimock including three of the 11 homes. It will continue to provide water to those homes while it performs more sampling. A Cabot spokesman said the company was pleased with the first round of results and it would continue to work with the EPA. New drilling techniques such as fracking have revolutionized the U.S. natural gas industry by giving companies access to vast new reserves that could supply the country's demand for 100 years, according to the industry. Environmentalists and health groups worry that some fracking operations near homes and schools pollute water and air. The industry denies that water supplies have ever been tainted by the technique. As fracking operations grow in the United States, tensions are also rising between federal and state governments about monitoring potential pollution from drilling. The EPA is conducting a national study to determine if fracking, in which companies blast large amounts of water laced with chemicals and sand deep underground to free natural gas and bring it to the surface, is polluting

water supplies. The agency said last week it would work with the state of Wyoming to retest water supplies after questions were raised about an EPA draft report showing that harmful chemicals from fracking fluids were likely present in a aquifer near the town of Pavillion. The next round of results from Dimock could be out late next week, a spokeswoman said.

LA TIMES

Washington, DC: Big heat moves up bloom time for *cherry* trees The landmark cherry trees lining the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C., will be blooming before their namesake festival even begins this year. That's the word from the National Park Service, which revised its forecast Thursday and now predicts the trees will begin to blossom Sunday and will peak between Tuesday and March 23. A forecast made March 1 had put the peak, a time when 70% of the trees' blossoms are open, between March 24 and 31. The National Cherry Blossom Festival doesn't begin until Tuesday and runs through April 27, by which time the blossoms may be long gone. The reason? Unusually warm temperatures that set a record Thursday of 82 at Reagan National Airport and 84 at Dulles International Airport. The big heat is coaxing the Yoshino cherry trees to blossom early -- and there's no sign of letup. The Weather Channel predicts Washington and Virginia next week will have temperatures in the mid- to high 70s and possibly as high as 80. Park Service horticulturist Robert DeFeo was quoted in an email as saying the blossoms "are moving and won't slow down -- not with night temps staying in the 50s," the Washington Post reported. The paper also said Thursday was the second time this week that the flowering forecast had changed. This is the centennial year for the cherry trees around the Jefferson Memorial, which were a goodwill gift from Japan. The original gift in 1912 included several varieties of more than 3,000 trees, a number that has waned over the years to 1,678, the park's website says.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lawsuits against EPA target chemical nutrient pollution that feeds algae blooms in US waters NEW ORLEANS — Environmental groups are suing the Environmental Protection Agency to force the federal government to curb an overdose of nutrients from farms and cities that end up in the nation's rivers, lakes and coastal waters. The groups say the nutrients cause toxic algae blooms and the massive low-oxygen "dead zone" that crops up every summer in the Gulf of Mexico. Environmentalists said Wednesday they hope lawsuits in federal courts in New Orleans and New York will force the EPA to stem the influx of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous into the waterways. The case is led by the Natural Resources Defense Council, a New York-based environmental law group.